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Human resources management

Human resources management reform: young professionals programme

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to section IV, paragraph 2, of General Assembly resolution 63/250, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a feasibility study, building on audit reports, to determine whether the broadening of the scope of the national competitive recruitment examination would serve to further strengthen the capacity of the Organization for programme delivery. In the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to ensure the expeditious placement of successful exam candidates and to report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit aimed at reducing the length of the exam process and improving roster management, as well as setting time frames for the completion of the process. The present report addresses the aforementioned requests and makes the case for an enhanced programme for entry-level in the Professional category.

* A/65/150.

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The primary mechanism for bringing young professionals into the Organization at the entry level is through the national competitive recruitment examination. The examination was first introduced in 1974 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2736 (XXV), in which the Assembly approved guidelines for the recruitment of staff for the Secretariat. In paragraph 2 (d) of the resolution, the Assembly indicated that in the interest of long-term recruitment planning policies, special efforts should be made to recruit qualified young men and women for service with the United Nations through the development of more objective selection methods, such as, wherever appropriate, open competitive examinations. In 1980, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/210, decided that for posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels, recruitment shall be made as a rule through competitive examinations. The exam is now an annual programme that attracts around 8,500 applicants, convokes approximately 2,700 candidates and places about 130 individuals a year on a roster for future recruitment to entry-level Professional positions.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/250, requested the Secretary-General to submit a feasibility study to determine whether the broadening of the scope of the national competitive recruitment examinations would strengthen the capacity of the Organization for programme delivery; to ensure the expeditious placement of successful candidates from the examinations; and to report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) aimed at reducing the length of the examination process and improving roster management, as well as setting time frames for the completion of the process. The Assembly also noted with concern that a large number of candidates who had passed the examination remained on the roster for years; welcomed the enhanced efforts of the Secretary-General to centrally manage the placement of successful candidates and requested him to intensify those efforts and to report thereon at the sixty-fifth session; and recognized the importance of the Secretary-General providing career development opportunities and support, including enhancing mobility for all staff.

B. Current problems

3. JIU conducted a review of the national competitive recruitment examination as a recruitment tool in 2007 (see A/62/707), along with a review examining the young professionals in the Organization (A/55/798) and a review of the age structure of the human resources in the Organization (see A/62/628). In addition, the Secretariat conducted a business process review of the national competitive recruitment examinations using the Lean Six Sigma methodology, with a view to identifying the bottlenecks that delay the process in order to streamline and reduce the length of the process. These reviews have highlighted several areas of concern, including the high age of staff in the Organization, the high age of staff at junior levels versus expected qualifications, the lengthy national competitive recruitment examination process and limited opportunities for career development for junior professionals. In particular, the JIU report on the examination as a recruitment tool reinforced the view that, while the current system is a cost-effective tool to provide qualified professionals

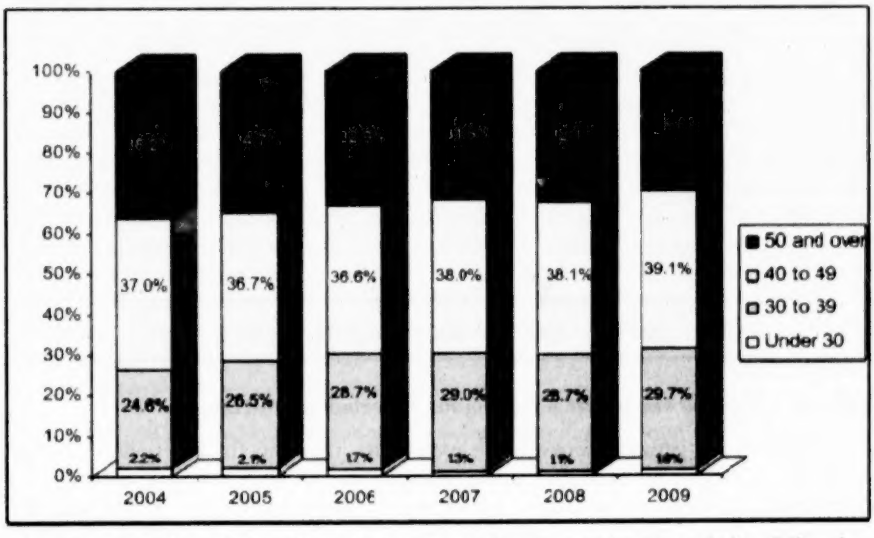
for the Organization to improve geographical representation and gender balance, it does not fully and efficiently address the growing needs of the Organization. The related recommendations of JIU are provided in annex I.

1. High age of staff in the Organization

4. The Organization's current demographic is provided in figures I to III below. As indicated in figure I, as at 30 June 2009, 68.6 per cent of staff in the Professional category were over the age of 40, while 29.5 per cent were over 50. While the over-50 age group has decreased since 2004, the 40-49 and 30-39 age groups have increased. Only 1.6 per cent of staff are under 30 years of age. As shown in figure II, in 2009, the average age of staff at the P-1 and P-2 levels was 32.1 and 37.2 years, respectively, and had grown steadily since 2004. At the P-3 level, the average age was 42.7 years, which had decreased compared to 2004. It should also be noted that the average age of entry into the United Nations in the Professional category is 39.9 years.

5. The average entry age of staff at the P-2 and P-3 levels has also increased consistently since 2004, with the average at the P-2 and P-3 levels in 2009 being 34.5 and 39.2, respectively, as illustrated in figure III. This high average age is the result of many factors, including the fact that candidates can take the exam up to the age of 32, the lengthy process for marking the exam and the long time that successful candidates remain on the roster awaiting placement. Moreover, the number of occupational groups tested during the examination has increased since its inception, while the posts available to those candidates successful in the more specific occupational groups are very limited. This has caused further delays in the placement of those candidates.

Figure I
Distribution of staff in the Professional category, by age group



Note: The population includes all types of contracts of one year or longer, excluding Tribunals and including National Officers (as at 30 June each year).

Figure II
Average age of staff in the Professional category, P-1 to P-3

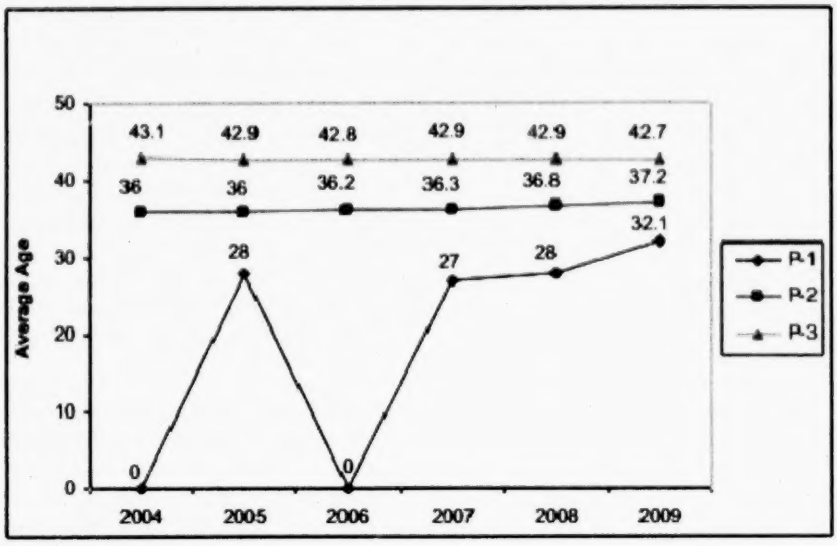
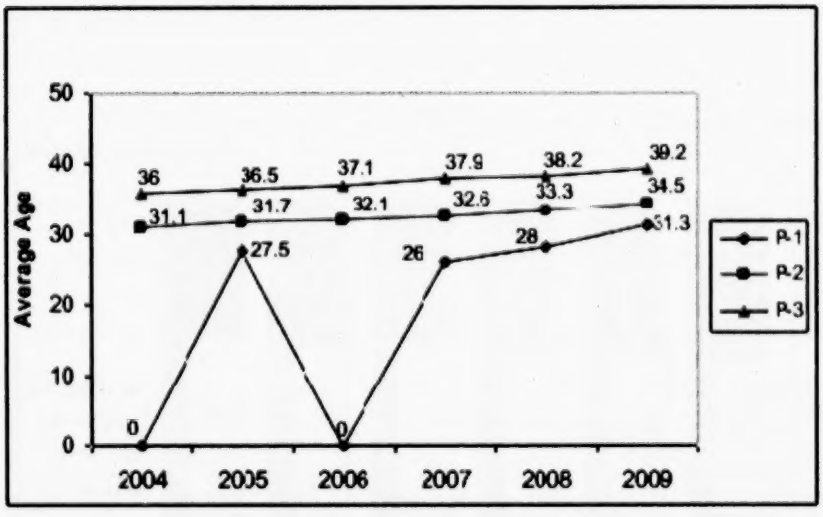


Figure III
Average age of entry of staff in the Professional category, P-1 to P-3



2. High age of staff at the junior levels versus expected qualifications

6. There is a mismatch between the experience required for positions at junior levels (P-1 and P-2) and the actual experience of the national competitive recruitment examination candidates who enter the Organization. As mentioned, the average age of staff currently entering at the P-2 level as at 30 June 2009 was 34.5. Given the high average entry age, the successful candidates have usually acquired skills and experience before joining the Organization that are greater than the

requirements at the P-2 level. Once placed, those staff then spend three to four years at the P-2 level before they are promoted to the P-3 level. As a result, their skills and experience are again often greater than the requirements for P-3 positions. This gap between experience and level creates frustrations for junior staff and ultimately has a negative impact on staff motivation and job satisfaction, resulting sometimes in staff leaving the Organization.

3. Lengthy process

7. The time it takes to conduct the examination is too long. It was noted in the business process review conducted by the Secretariat that the period of time from the announcement of the examination to the placement of a candidate on the roster may be as long as 24 months. Owing to the low number of P-2 posts, placement from the roster into a post in the Secretariat may also take a significant amount of time.

8. In the business process review, two specific parts of the process were identified as being particularly lengthy: the application period and the marking period. Until 2009, the application period extended for six months, adding significant time to the overall process. However, in order to shorten the process, the application period for examinations in 2010 was reduced to three and a half months. The marking period varies greatly and may take up to 14 months. The delay in the marking of examinations is due mainly to the lack of ownership at the departmental level of dedicated resources for marking. The marking of the examinations has been undertaken by volunteers released by substantive departments on the basis of goodwill towards the national competitive recruitment examination programme. Securing the release of examination markers at the most convenient time in the process has not always happened. In the current round of examinations, before announcing the examinations, the heads of departments were requested to nominate the board members who will be marking the examinations in a dedicated time period.

9. In addition to this trend, the lack of guaranteed placement of successful candidates has further eroded the effectiveness of the examination. On average, each year the number of candidates passing the examination exceeds the number of available vacancies, resulting in a roster that has had as many as 500 candidates. The resulting impact has been that many candidates have remained on the roster for years, and the probability of selection decreases each year, with a notable drop after four and a half years. In addition, communication between the candidates, recruiters and hiring managers has not been periodic or consistent. In many instances, candidates have gone months without any updates from the Organization on the progress of examinations or on possible openings that may be of interest to those on the roster. The Secretariat has identified this lack of adequate communication as a major impediment to an expedient recruitment process, which has a negative impact on the placement of successful rostered candidates.

10. Furthermore, the current examination process not only involves a great deal of manual, labour-intensive components and elements, but also entails complicated logistical arrangements. These factors make it impossible to allow the test to be given to a larger pool of candidates.

4. Limited career development for staff at the junior levels

11. Junior staff have often experienced disappointment and dissatisfaction with the level of career development support and opportunities provided once they have entered the Organization. The national competitive recruitment examination has historically focused predominantly on the recruitment process. While enhancements have been made in the form of orientation and mobility programmes, junior staff often have had limited opportunities for exposure to different facets of the Organization, particularly to the field, and career development has not been made a central focus. Current career development support and opportunities for upward mobility are lacking. For example, in terms of career progression, although there is a mechanism for encouraging the promotion of Staff recruited through the national competitive recruitment examination from the P-2 to the P-3 level, it has not been enforced in a systematic way across the Organization. Therefore, in some cases, such staff remain at the P-2 level for a lengthy period of time.

II. Vision for a new young professionals programme

12. To address the problems set out above, a new young professionals programme for the United Nations would integrate the outreach, recruitment, placement, career development and mobility of entry-level staff into one centrally managed process while fostering the goal of the national competitive recruitment examination to increase the diversity of the Secretariat and improve its geographical representation. It would build on the strengths of and expand on the currently established systems, policies and practices of the Organization and would employ an efficient, effective examination process, making use of online and computer-based technology.

13. The programme would serve to rejuvenate the Organization, providing an influx of young talent with fresh ideas to help it respond to the needs of the twenty-first century. The aim would be to develop a pool of dynamic, adaptable and diverse young professionals to their full potential and from which the Organization could draw to fill middle and senior management functions in the medium and long term.

14. The Office of Human Resources Management would centrally manage the programme, in close cooperation with expert panels in the respective job networks and departments.

A. Posts

15. The programme would make use of all regular budget posts and 15 per cent of vacant posts in the extrabudgetary and peacekeeping support accounts, at the P-1 and P-2 levels (approximately 130 to 180 per year), excluding language posts. All candidates would be granted geographical status regardless of the source of funding. The inclusion of a small portion of extrabudgetary posts would make it possible to rotate staff to different locations, providing young professionals with a greater opportunity to gain experience in other duty stations. This would in turn provide a wider breadth of understanding of the diverse work of the Organization, allowing staff to develop professionally and helping the Organization to develop a dynamic, adaptable and global workforce to better meet its mandates.

B. Target candidates

16. The programme would attract young, dynamic, adaptable university graduates with diversity in geographic origin and gender who are dedicated to the purpose and mandates of the Organization and are looking for a challenging international career with opportunities across the Secretariat. The programme would ensure that the qualifications of the staff meet the requirements of the job by aligning the skills and experience needed for junior positions with candidates who are qualified and suitable for each opening.

Nationality

17. Similar to the current approach, the programme would be open to young professionals from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States or those in danger of becoming so.

Age

18. Candidates should be 26 years old or younger by the end of the calendar year in which the exam is taken. For those Member States that have mandatory military service, adjustments would be made to accommodate the periods of such service.

Education

19. Similar to the current requirements, candidates should have at least a first-level university degree (bachelor's degree or equivalent) in a relevant field.

Languages

20. Similar to the current requirements, candidates should be proficient in either English or French.

Work experience

21. Similar to the current requirements, no previous work experience would be required.

22. The young professionals programme incorporates many elements, some that could be implemented immediately and others that would take some time to more fully develop. The various components of the current national competitive recruitment examination programme and changes that would come into effect in phase I (2010-2012) and phase II (2013 and beyond) of the programme are highlighted in table 1.

Table 1
Proposed changes in the national competitive recruitment examination programme

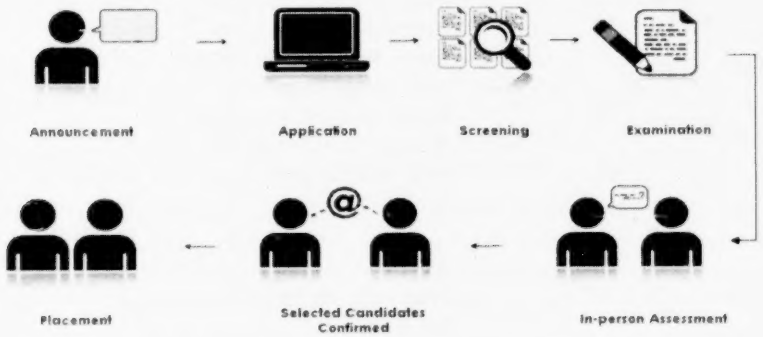
	Current national competitive recruitment examination	*Phase I: 2011-2012*	*Phase II: 2013 and beyond*
1. Posts	• Regular budget (geographical)	• Regular budget (geographical)	• Regular budget (geographical)
		• 15 per cent of vacant extrabudgetary and support account posts	• 10 per cent of vacant extrabudgetary and support account posts
2. Eligibility/target candidates	• From Member States that are unrepresented, underrepresented or below midpoint	• From Member States that are unrepresented, underrepresented or below midpoint	• From Member States that are unrepresented, underrepresented or below midpoint
	• 32 years or younger	• 26 years or younger	• 26 years or younger
3. Screening	• Manual	• Automated (Inspira) and manual	• Automated (Inspira) and manual
	• Certain countries do their own	• Certain countries do their own	• No screening done by countries
	• Maximum of 40 candidates per country per occupational group	• Maximum of 40 candidates per country per occupational group	• No limit
4. Examination	• Paper-based	• Paper-based with process improvements	• Online or computer-based
			• Comprehensive review of exam content to align with new eligibility criteria
5. Roster	• Can remain indefinitely	• Valid for one year/reserve list of 10 per cent	• Valid for 1 year/reserve list of 10 per cent
6. Career support: placement	• None	• Centralized initial placement at P-1 level	• Centralized initial placement at P-1 level
		• Placement at P-2 level in different duty station after initial two years of successful performance	• Placement at P-2 level in different duty station after initial two years of successful performance
7. Career support: orientation, training, promotion	• one-week orientation in first year	• two-week orientation at Staff College and United Nations Logistics Base at beginning of placement	• two-week orientation at Staff College and United Nations Logistics Base at beginning of placement
	• Mentor	• two-year training and development plan	• two-year training and development plan

Current national competitive recruitment examination	*Phase I: 2011-2012*	*Phase II: 2013 and beyond*
	• Allocated, dedicated training budget for each candidate, similar to the Junior Professional Officer programme, to provide opportunities for training relevant to their area of work and the skills they need to acquire • Mentor • Priority given for posts at P-3 level	• Allocated, dedicated training budget • Mentor • Priority given for posts at P-3 level • On-the-job training (requires needs assessment)

C. Programme components

23. The young professionals programme would build on current processes and components of the national competitive recruitment examination process, leverage targeted outreach and utilize Inspira to ensure not only that candidates of a high calibre are identified, selected and brought into the Organization, but also to provide opportunities for growth and career development. An overview of the process of the programme is depicted in figure IV. The following paragraphs provide detailed descriptions of the various programme components.

Figure IV
Overview of the young professionals programme process



	National competitive recruitment examination	Young professionals programme
Announcement to selection	Average 22 months	15 months maximum
Placement	Average 24 months 60 per cent of candidates placed	1-12 months all candidates placed

1. Outreach

24. Outreach initiatives are critical to effectively address the representation status of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, as well as to identify suitable candidates for the young professionals programme in the relevant job networks. The Organization will identify current needs and will work in partnership with Member States to develop appropriate, targeted outreach activities that will help to improve diversity in the Organization, addressing in particular unrepresented and underrepresented countries. The outreach efforts would include the conduct of outreach missions, attendance at career fairs and organization of informational sessions.

2. Application process

25. The young professionals programme would become the entry point for a majority of junior positions in the global Secretariat. In phase I, applications would be managed in the same job families (previously called "occupational groups") as those for the current national competitive recruitment examination. In phase II, applications would be managed in broad job networks, such as management and operations support (MAGNET), political, peace and security (POLNET) and economic and social development (ECONET).

26. Interested candidates would apply online via the United Nations careers portal through Inspira. Information on the programme, including examinations and application procedures, would also be available from the careers portal.

3. Screening process

27. In order to manage the large volume of applications, the screening and application process would be done online using Inspira. There would be a two-part screening process.

28. Qualification screening would be done to ensure that minimum requirements such as age, education and nationality are fully met.

29. The second screening would assess the candidate's basic level of knowledge or expertise in the relevant technical area through questions related to the subject matter. The questions would be developed with testing and subject matter experts in the job networks and substantive departments. Filtering the applicants earlier in the process would result in a more refined pool of candidates and allow manual screening efforts to focus on reviewing the best candidates. This capability has been developed in Inspira and would be implemented for the young professionals programme through the same platform.

4. Examination process

30. After the candidates had been screened, there would be a two-part examination process that would be conducted once a year.

31. A technical examination assessing proficiency in the relevant subject matter would be the first step. In line with the current application process, the technical examination would be based on the job families currently existing for the national competitive recruitment examination. In phase II, the job families would be aligned to the job networks (management and operations support; political, peace and security; economic and social development; information systems and communications technology; legal; public information and external relations; and safety and security). There would not be an examination in conference management, as most of the positions are language-related, and a small number of positions could be covered under management and operations support. This would enable the Organization to move holistically in the direction of job networks to ensure that its workforce of the future encompasses more broad-based knowledge and not only the capacity to work in more narrowly focused areas. Furthermore, utilization of the broader groupings of job families would be in line with the focus of the programme, which is to recruit qualified junior staff with limited experience with the intent of exposing them to multiple areas of the Organization.

32. Initially, the examination would be offered in the current paper-based format, which is extremely labour intensive, lengthy and outdated, requiring a particular manner of printing, packing and shipping of materials in order to ensure confidentiality and security before and after the examinations. In addition, the paper-based format always carries a risk of delay in the delivery of materials, owing to unforeseen events.[1]

[1] The current paper-based format requires the printing of more than 3,500 question booklets and 3,500 answer booklets per year. The question and answer booklets need to be sorted by job family and the location where the exams will be administered and then packed and sealed in special pouches. The packages of booklets are shipped to 40 to 50 examination centres around the world and tracked closely to avoid loss or damage. Once the examinations have been completed, the booklets are repacked, sealed and returned to the Office of Human Resources Management by the examination centres. The returned booklets are checked against the lists of applicants' signatures to ensure that the correct booklets have been returned. Before the answer booklets are distributed to markers, the booklets are sorted by language. Then each booklet is numbered by a perforator, the cover of the booklet is removed, and the remaining answer sheets are sorted by question, stapled and delivered to markers by hand.

33. In order to address this extensive labour-intensive process, online and computer-based testing techniques that would also ensure timely and wider access to candidates taking the examination would be explored for possible implementation in future years.

34. The second phase of the examination process would be an in-person assessment for candidates who have passed the technical component. In phase I of the programme, this assessment would follow the same format as the current national competitive recruitment examination oral examination. In phase II, the in-person assessment would expand on the oral exam process to evaluate not only the competencies of a candidate but also his or her suitability for the Organization through assessment mechanisms such as role play, group exercises, presentations and psychological assessment.

D. Initial placement, mobility, promotion opportunities and career development

1. Initial placement and second assignment

35. The initial placement of young professionals would be conducted centrally four times a year by the Office of Human Resources Management, in coordination with respective job networks, based on the career interest of candidates, the availability of positions and the interest of programme managers.

36. Functional and geographical mobility would be a cornerstone of the programme and would be expanded to expose young professionals to different facets of the Organization, promoting professional development and personal growth and preparing them for senior positions later in their careers.

37. Currently, staff recruited through the national competitive recruitment examination are expected to move through a managed reassignment programme two to three years into their careers. However, the programme does not necessarily involve a geographical move. In addition, posts are not required to be included in the programme. Consequently, some candidates do not have the opportunity to be exposed to different locations or areas of the Organization.

38. In contrast, the young professionals programme would consist of a two-year assignment at the P-1 level. Because of the extremely small number of P-1-level positions, candidates would be placed at the P-1 level against P-2 posts. After having been successfully reviewed, the candidate would be rotated to a different duty station at the P-2 level. Specifically, a candidate who has been at a headquarters duty station would move to a field office or regional commission and vice versa.

39. By establishing the central placement of candidates during designated periods of the year, the programme would ensure that all successful candidates were placed by eliminating the roster and selecting only the number of candidates needed (plus a small reserve list) determined through more systematic planning for available P-2-level posts. It would also allow for better planning and certainty for programme managers, as they would have better information on when candidates would join their team. Successful candidates who were not placed in positions within the year would be dropped from the programme, but would be free to retake the examination.

40. For initial placement, each candidate would be given a list of three positions, at least one of which would be located at a headquarters duty station and one at a non-headquarters duty station. Candidates would be asked to rank their preferences with the understanding that they would accept any position offered for their first placement and take a different position, in a different duty station, for the second placement. A brief description of each position would be forwarded to the candidate. Similarly, managers of each position would receive a list of three candidates identified as the best match for the position, based on the position requirements and the profile of candidates. Managers would be asked to rank the candidates and indicate their preferences, with the understanding that they would accept any of the candidates offered. A brief profile of the candidates would be forwarded to managers. Interviews would not be necessary, unless required by the managers. All information would be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources Management, which would conduct an exercise to match candidates with positions. This could be done in such a way as to maximize the preferences of both managers and candidates. Final placement decisions would be made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management centrally. While the Office of Human Resources Management would make every effort to work with departments to facilitate the placement of their preferred candidates, in the event that there is disagreement between the Office of Human Resources Management and client departments, the final decisions on placement would be made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

2. Career development

41. The career development of young professionals in the programme would include initial orientation and training followed by two assignments, including a well-structured performance assessment, learning and development component.

Orientation and training

42. All rostered candidates matched for their first assignment would be invited to a special orientation and training programme prior to assuming their functions. This programme could be offered at one of the headquarters locations or at a logistical base for field support, depending on whether the first placement is in a headquarters location or in a peacekeeping mission. A prototype of this programme already exists in the week-long orientation and training programme conducted for junior professionals. The orientation would be revised and extended to two weeks in accordance with the new objectives of the young professionals programme and would include the development of individual career development plans. The orientation programme would be held quarterly for the incoming candidates.

43. The programme would comprise two parts: a general orientation and training programme for all job families and, a job network-specific orientation, conducted separately for each job network.

44. After candidates completed the programmes, they would depart for their respective duty stations. A duty station-specific orientation programme, which is normally offered when new staff arrive at the duty station, could also be given.

45. To strengthen training support, a dedicated training budget in the amount of $2,500 would be allocated for each candidate, as is done for the associate experts programme. This would provide opportunities for training relevant to each

candidate's area of work and the skills they needed to acquire. For purposes of the programme, the budgetary allocation would be financed through the overall training resources of the Office of Human Resources Management through a reprioritization of funds to accommodate this need.

Job network (occupational group) — specific orientation and induction programme

46. This part of the programme would be carried out for each job network separately and would cover all aspects of starting up a professional career in each group or network. The elements of the programme would be developed by each job network based on its specific needs assessment.

3. Promotion opportunities

47. In order to give staff of the young professionals programme priority in consideration for P-3-level positions, such vacancies would first be advertised internally for 15 days. Only if no suitable candidate were found would the posts then be advertised externally. In the case of field positions, young professionals programme staff would be reviewed before other candidates on the relevant roster.

4. Performance management

48. The performance of young professionals, including the setting and achievement of learning and development objectives, would be monitored closely during each of their first two assignments. The Office of Human Resources Management, in cooperation with the respective managers, would ensure that all participants in the programme had a defined workplan, performance objectives, training and learning plan and overall career development goals. Performance would be managed through the established performance management system.

49. Supervisors of staff recruited under the programme would be given a special briefing by their local human resources offices in order to ensure that they understood the specifics of the programme and appreciated the importance of the role of managers and local human resources offices in guiding and supporting the growth and development of young professional staff.

50. The performance report given by the supervisor at the end of each assignment would be an important component in decision-making for the next assignment or the next step in the career development of young professional staff.

5. Competitive examination for recruitment to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

51. The Competitive examination for recruitment to the Professional category of staff members from other categories (G to P examination) would be integrated into the young professionals programme, except that the age limits would not apply to G to P candidates. Under the current format, specific posts are reserved for successful candidates, the number of which is based on up to 10 per cent of the number of staff, other than language staff, recruited during the previous calendar year at the junior professional (P-1 and P-2) levels, plus three posts in duty stations with chronically high vacancy rates and seven non-geographical posts. In the young professionals programme, 10 per cent of the total pool of positions available for the

programme would be earmarked for successful G to P candidates, who could be placed in any available post.

52. The current eligibility criteria would remain applicable. While the current G to P examination is consistent with the national competitive recruitment examination, it is currently marked separately by different markers. However, under the young professionals programme, the same markers would mark both sets of examinations in order to ensure fairness, consistency and efficiency.

53. The same rotation policy that is proposed above for young professionals programme staff (see paras. 36-38) would be applied to successful G to P candidates for their first and second assignments. Successful G to P candidates would have to move to a different duty station for the first assignment. For the second assignment they would also move to a different duty station, which could be the original duty station where they were serving prior to the initial assignment. In addition, since staff in the General Service and related categories in certain duty stations have higher salaries than those at the P-1 level in certain duty stations, transitional measures would be used to ensure that successful G to P candidates would not receive salaries lower than that which they received at the General Service level.

Links to national competitive recruitment examination

54. The improved business process that resulted from the review mentioned in paragraph 3 has already been implemented for the national competitive recruitment examination in 2010. The major improvements implemented include shortening the application period from six months to three and half months, obtaining the agreement of senior management prior to the start of the examination to ensure the designation of board members dedicated to marking examinations for a certain period of time (e.g. two weeks) and providing training to board members involved in designing and marking the examinations. These improvements are expected to result in a significant reduction of process cycle time which is currently approximately nine months. The improved business process and any lessons learned from the existing national competitive recruitment examination would also be taken into account in the future development of the young professionals programme, including the assessment of an online and computer-based pre-screening, examination and placement process.

Roster rightsizing

55. The Secretariat has made efforts to rightsize the current roster of successful candidates from the national competitive recruitment examination. In October 2009 there were 521 candidates on the roster. The Organization started a process of contacting every candidate on the roster to confirm his or her interest in and availability for placement at the P-2 level. The Secretariat tried various means to trace as many candidates as possible, including conducting Internet searches and contacting permanent missions for assistance in locating the candidates. Those candidates who could not be traced were considered inactive and would not be considered for any positions until they were located.

56. Through that exercise, as well as through the business process review, it was determined that remaining on the roster for four to five years significantly diminished the chance of being selected for several reasons: (a) programme managers tend to prefer candidates who have passed the examination recently;

(b) candidates have accumulated additional years of experience, making them qualified for P-3-level jobs and no longer interested in P-2-level positions, and (c) candidates' contact information becomes outdated and communication links to them are lost.

57. At the end of the exercise, 75 candidates were untraceable or uninterested, 114 were interested in P-3 positions only and 168 had been placed. The 167 candidates who had passed the 2009 examinations were added to the roster, resulting in a total of 331 rostered candidates. Taking into account that the 21 candidates who were above the age of 40 and the 94 candidates who had been on the active roster for more than five years had very little chance of being hired, the active roster realistically was 216 as at July 2010 (see table 2).

Table 2
Rightsizing of national competitive recruitment examination roster (July 2010)

On the roster in third quarter 2009	521
Untraceable/not interested	-75
Interested in P-3 only	-114
Candidates placed since October 2009	-168
Successful 2009 candidates	167
Subtotal	**331**
Over 40 years old	-21
More than 5 years on the roster	-94
Total	**216**

58. To expedite the placement of rostered candidates, the Office of Human Resources Management has started to conduct quarterly reviews of post incumbency against P-2 geographic posts subject to placement through the national competitive recruitment examination or G to P examination and will identify positions that remain vacant or are not filled properly for three months or longer. Such positions will be filled directly by the Office of Human Resources Management through the authority given by the General Assembly to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. The expeditious filling of positions has been reinforced through communication to departments and offices on the responsibility of programme managers to initiate the timely filling of vacant P-2-level posts from national competitive recruitment examination rosters.

Pilot project for the placement of national competitive recruitment and G to P examination rostered candidates in field positions

59. A pilot project for the placement of national competitive recruitment and G to P examination rostered candidates in field mission posts at the P-2 level was conducted recently. For this purpose, some 150 positions in various field missions representing several occupational groups and functional titles were identified. All active candidates on the roster were informed of this opportunity and invited to express their interest in a field assignment. A total of 36 candidates replied positively and 6 received offers on the basis of their preferences and the needs of the Organization. Candidates who

accepted offers would be invited to a special orientation and induction training in Brindisi for junior professionals prior to their departure to the field. Participants in the programme are given initial one- or two-year fixed-term contracts and are later absorbed into the Organization on regular budget posts through one of the established means, including the managed reassignment programme (see below).

Integration of the managed reassignment programme and G to P placement with the national competitive recruitment examination roster placement exercise

60. One of the major obstacles to the efficient placement of candidates from the national competitive recruitment examination roster was the fact that available P-2 positions have had to be frozen for a large part of the year owing to the implementation of either the managed reassignment programme or the G to P placement exercise. The time when such posts have been available for recruitment between the two freezing exercises was often not sufficient for identifying and on-boarding a suitable national competitive recruitment examination candidate. As a result, P-2 positions are not able to be filled in a timely manner. In order to address this problem, starting in late 2009, the managed reassignment programme and the national competitive recruitment examination placement exercise were combined with great success, and the associated posts were not subject to long-term freezing. A revised version of this same process will be used for the 2010 national competitive recruitment examination.

Resource implications

61. There are no immediate and foreseeable additional resources required for the implementation of the young professionals programme. The programme would require the following resources, which would be redeployed from within existing resources and using existing capacities as follows:

(a) Phase I. As previously stated, a training budget amounting to a maximum of $450,000 per year ($2,500 per person for approximately 180 candidates) would be required. As indicated, this would be accomplished through the reallocation of existing training funds provided to the Office of Human Resources Management.

(b) Phase II:

(i) A training budget amounting to a maximum of $450,000 per year ($2,500 per person for approximately 180 candidates) would continue to be required. As indicated above, this would be accomplished through the reallocation of existing training funds provided to the Office of Human Resources Management;

(ii) While the development of online and computer-based examinations would require additional resources, the Secretariat would undertake a feasibility study on online and computer-based examinations and revert to the General Assembly at a later time with the outcome of the study, including resources implications.

III. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

62. The General Assembly is requested:

(a) To approve the change of the age limit for the national competitive recruitment examination from 32 years to 26 and to authorize the Secretary-General to make adjustments for those Member States with mandatory military service;

(b) To approve the use of 15 per cent of vacant extrabudgetary and peacekeeping support account posts for the young professionals programme;

(c) To approve the internal circulation of P-3-level positions for 15 days to give priority consideration to the young professionals programme candidates and external circulation thereafter if no suitable candidate is identified.

Annex I

List of recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Review of the national competitive recruitment examination as a recruitment tool (A/62/707)

Recommendation	*Actions taken*[a]
1. The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report, in particular, those aimed at reducing the length of the exam process and improving roster management.	Paras. 22, 33, 55, 58-60
2. The Secretary-General should regulate, through an administrative issuance, the entire exam process including the announcement, convocation and organization of national competitive recruitment examinations, with clear delegation of authority on the different elements in the decision-making and operational process.	Paras. 3, 12, 14
3. The Secretary-General should take concerted measures to improve the reliability of national competitive recruitment examination-related labour force planning and to make it an integral and coherent part of the overall strategic labour force planning for the Organization.	Paras. 12-13, 35
4. The Secretary-General should ensure that the identification of occupational groups in which competitive examinations are held is in line with the overall human resources policy of the Organization.	Paras. 25, 31
5. The Secretary-General should elaborate and implement a set of measures to reduce the length of the present national competitive recruitment examination process, in particular the examination process, by investing commensurate financial resources in the process. The exact dates of the beginning and end of the examination phase should be set and made public.	Paras. 15, 26, 61
6. The Secretary-General should initiate measures to ensure that an increased joint corporate responsibility prevails in the Organization and supports the activity of specialized boards of examiners. To maintain the high quality of the examination process, detailed criteria for the selection of board members should be established and the work of the specialized board of examiner members should be recognized properly in the performance evaluation.	Para. 54
7. In the framework of the new administrative issuance regulating the national competitive recruitment examination system, the Secretary-General should reorganize and strengthen the Central Recruitment and Examinations Board with a mandate to play a substantial strategic oversight role in the examination process.	An administrative instruction will be issued after the review of the General Assembly; in the meantime, board members are receiving specialized training this year

Recommendation	*Actions taken*[a]
8. The Secretary-General should elaborate and implement an action plan with a view to reorganizing the present national competitive recruitment examination roster management system to address the identified weaknesses, including the integrated recruitment and reassignment system at the P-2 level, and strengthening its information technology and website support and tools.	Paras. 55, 58-60
9. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), should propose that the Human Resources Network of CEB review the possibility of cooperation, on a voluntary basis, among the United Nations system organizations concerning competitive recruitment examinations, roster management and related recruitment issues.	The HR Network following the discussion of three papers in 2009 on succession planning; recruitment for senior posts; and recruitment practices, has established a focus group to look further into these issues

[a] Paragraph numbers refer to the main part of the present report.

Age structure of human resources in the organizations of the United Nations system (A/62/628)

Recommendation	*Actions taken to implement recommendations*
1. The legislative body of each organization of the United Nations system should: (a) request its executive head to provide detailed and analytical information regarding age structure and other related information as part of a periodic human resources management report; and (b) set targets, establish benchmarks, and use them to monitor the measures taken by the organization to address the potential impact of ageing of its staff members.	Paras. 4-6
2. The legislative body of each organization of the United Nations system should request its executive head to review the staffing structure of his or her organization in order to establish a balanced staff grade structure. To rejuvenate the staffing structure, more junior level posts (at P-2 and P-3 levels) should be established to attract young professionals. To achieve this, adequate cooperation and coordination between the human resources/finance divisions and the substantive divisions should be ensured.	Paras. 13-16
3. The executive heads of each United Nations system organization should review, in consultation with the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the CEB Human Resources Network, the standards of eligibility requirements for posts at and below the P-3 level, placing more emphasis on educational qualifications, technical skills and potential performance.	Paras. 17-22
4. The executive heads of each United Nations system organization should: (a) undertake special measures to ensure the influx of young professionals through special recruitment drives; (b) strengthen the career development prospects for young	Paras. 23-24, 41-47

Recommendation	*Actions taken to implement recommendations*
professionals through enhanced training and staff development; (c) allocate adequate resources for training and staff development activities; and (d) adequately address the work/life issues of staff members with special attention to the family-related issues of young professionals.	
5. Legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive management to: (a) submit regular reports showing retirement forecasts; (b) establish performance indicators to forecast replacement needs and monitor their implementation; and (c) take adequate measures to ensure proper knowledge transfer and safeguard institutional memory.	It is up to each organization, in consultation with the legislative bodies, to respond to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit. Retirement information is captured and reported as part of the human resources action plans/ human resources management scorecard, which includes an indicator requiring the publication of upcoming vacancies due to retirement six months prior to the retirement date
6. The Executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should request the CEB secretariat, through its Human Resources Network, to assess the current status of succession planning in these organizations, and include succession planning on the agenda for in-depth discussion at its regular meetings, with a view to developing policies and a framework for succession planning, using the broad benchmarks provided in the report, for adoption by the United Nations system.	The Human Resources Network, following the discussion of papers in 2009 on succession planning; recruitment for senior posts; and recruitment practices, has established a focus group to look further into these issues
7. The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of CEB, to initiate a review, with the involvement of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund Board and ICSC, on the possibility of changing the mandatory age of separation in view of the number of impending retirements in the United Nations system, with due consideration to the increase in life expectancy at the age of 60.	The item was reviewed by the ICSC and the Human Resources Network in 2009, and by the Pension Board in July 2010
8. Executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, in coordination with CEB and ICSC, should review the existing regulations and financial limits relating to the employment of retirees, with a view to making them more flexible, and submit an appropriate proposal to their respective legislative bodies.	The Secretary-General does not propose any change to the current policy

Young professionals in selected organizations of the United Nations system: recruitment, management and retention (A/55/778)

Recommendation	*Actions taken to implement recommendations*
1. Secretariats should undertake specific efforts to reduce the age at recruitment for all Professional posts and for P-1 to P-3 posts in particular. The Secretariat may wish, for its part, to review the adequacy of the age limit presently imposed for (national competitive recruitment examination candidates.	Paras. 18, 22
2. Trends on separations of Professional staff in the United Nations system should be more carefully monitored through: (a) the inclusion by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions in its "Personnel Statistics" annual publication of data on separations of Professional staff broken down by grade and type of separation; (b) the design of exit questionnaires, by secretariats that have not yet instituted them, to better identify causes of resignations. Such questionnaires may be completed or replaced by structured exit interviews.	ICSC and the Human Resources Network reviewed the issue in 2009 and a standard exit questionnaire was approved
3. Secretariats of all organizations concerned should speed up recruitment processes by imposing strict deadlines for the review of applications by managers and the placement of candidates.	Para. 58
4. Further efforts should be undertaken by the Secretariat to accelerate the placement of successful national competitive recruitment examination candidates, reduce the number of candidates presently on the roster and optimize the use of this roster, through: (a) strengthening linkages between human resources planning, examinations and staffing, which should not be conducted as separate operations but as an integrated process; (b) submitting proposals to the General Assembly to further contain the number of candidates on the roster, such as time limitations on its validity or the automatic suspension of the examination in occupational groups for which the roster exceeds a predetermined number of candidates; (c) sharing the roster with other organizations, especially for common occupational fields.	Paras. 39, 55, 58-60
5. The General Assembly may wish to call on Member States to cooperate more effectively in the organization of the examination and, in particular, in its publicity. The Secretary-General could also include in regular reports on human resources management examples of good practices in this regard.	Member States participating in the 2010 exam are making concerted efforts in the organization and publicity of the exam
6. Secretariats that have not done so should set up structures to assist with the successful integration of young professionals during their first months through: (a) clearly identifying focal points in personnel/human resources services or substantive departments to assist new recruits with all practical problems; (b) designing appropriate orientation courses for young professionals. Such courses could be organized jointly with the	Paras. 22, 41-46

Recommendation	*Actions taken to implement recommendations*
support of the United Nations Staff College; (c) instituting mentoring programmes whereby more senior officers can advise young professionals on substantive and career issues.	
7. Secretariats of organizations concerned should offer the opportunity to junior professional staff members to pursue studies and research in fields of relevance to their work by making them eligible sooner for study leave or by instituting new part-time study schemes.	
8. Secretariats of organizations concerned should increase opportunities for young professionals to be assigned both at Headquarters and in the field in the course of their first five or six years. The Secretariat of the United Nations, in particular, should further improve career development for young professionals. In due course, it should assess the impact of its Managed Reassignment Programme to ensure that it facilitates mobility not only between departments but also between duty stations and that it contributes to upward as well as lateral mobility.	Paras. 36, 40, 35, 59
9. Managers in organizations concerned should devote sufficient time and attention to the development of their junior staff. Appraisal of the way in which they discharge this responsibility should be an integral part of their performance evaluation.	Paras. 48-50
10. Efforts to facilitate spouse employment should be undertaken as follows: (a) secretariats in major duty stations should set up joint family-career transition programmes; (b) governing bodies of organizations that still forbid spouse employment should rescind this restriction by amending relevant staff regulations; (c) the General Assembly should renew its call to Governments in host countries to consider granting work permits for spouses accompanying staff members, and monitor the implementation of relevant resolutions.	This is an ongoing agenda within both the Secretariat and the Human Resources Network

Annex II

Requests made by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/250

General Assembly resolution 63/250

Recommendation	*Actions taken*
1. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, for consideration at its sixty-fifth session, a feasibility study, building on audit reports, to determine whether the broadening of the scope of the national competitive examination would serve to further strengthen the capacity of the Organization for programme delivery, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report (sect. IV, para. 2)	YPP report
2. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure the expeditious placement of successful candidates from national competitive examinations (ibid., para. 4)	Paras. 55, 58
3. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit aimed at reducing the length of the national competitive recruitment examination process and improving the national competitive recruitment examination roster management, as well as setting time frames for completion of the process (ibid., para. 6)	Paras. 22, 33, 55, 58-60
4. Requests the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, to further cooperate within the framework of the Human Resources Network, making better use of national competitive recruitment examinations and existing rosters, and improving inter-agency mobility (ibid., para. 7)	The Human Resources Network and ICSC reviewed the issue of inter-agency mobility in 2010; it will be discussed at the Secretary-General's 2010 retreat with his Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General The Human Resources Network focus group will be reviewing this issue further